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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 16, 2006

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PSEUDOEPHEDRINE SWEEP IN SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY
LEADS TO THREE FEDERAL INDICTMENTS OF SIX RESIDENTS

SACRAMENTO-- United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott, San Joaquin County District Attorney James P. Willet, San Joaquin County Sheriff Robert Heidelberg, and Assistant Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Gordon D. Taylor announced today that a federal grand jury returned three separate indictments, which were unsealed Thursday, June 15, 2006, charging six Stockton area residents with distribution of pseudoephedrine knowing or having reasonable cause to believe that it would be used to manufacture methamphetamine. Charged in one case with distributing pseudoephedrine from a liquor store in Manteca, CA, were ARJINDER SINGH, 36, JASWANT KAUR, 53, SUCHA SINGH, 52, and GURMINDER SINGH, 24, all of Manteca. Charged in two separate indictments with distributing pseudoephedrine from liquor stores in Stockton, CA were PAUL PANNU, 38, of Stockton, CA and NAVNEET JUDGE, 31, formerly of Stockton, CA.

This case is the product of an extensive/joint investigation by the DEA, and the San Joaquin County Metropolitan Narcotics Task Force (METRO) which is a multi-jurisdictional task force. The San Joaquin County Metropolitan Narcotics Task Force is comprised of officers from the San Joaquin County Sheriff's Department, San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office, California Highway Patrol (CHP), California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement (BNE), Stockton Police Department, Manteca Police Department, and the DEA. METRO operates primarily under California Office of Emergency Services Cal-MMET and Anti-Drug Abuse grant funds.

The investigation commenced based upon information that employees at several San Joaquin County liquor stores were knowingly selling excessive quantities of cold medications under circumstances where it was clear that the purchaser intended to extract the pseudoephedrine to use in the manufacture of methamphetamine. Recent efforts by federal and state law enforcement agencies have lead to stricter regulation concerning over-the-counter sales of pseudoephedrine. On March 9, 2006, President Bush signed the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act of 2005, restricting access to large quantities of drugs used in the manufacturing of methamphetamine such as pseudoephedrine. This legislation includes limits on daily retail and monthly mail order/Internet sales, and requires behind-the-counter placement or display and storage in locked cabinets. It also requires regulated sellers such as retail distributors and pharmacies to maintain a written logbook of purchases and that buyers present photo

identification and sign the logbook.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Mary L. Grad, who is prosecuting the cases, the indictments allege that on multiple separate occasions in 2005 and 2006, the named defendants sold quantities of cold medicine containing pseudoephedrine under circumstances where a reasonable person would know that the pseudoephedrine would be used to manufacture methamphetamine.

"Methamphetamine is unquestionably the most dangerous drug not just in our region, but across the nation. It is the root cause of a great deal of property crime, as well as a frequent contributor to violent crimes, such as domestic violence and child abuse. Cracking down on stores selling huge quantities of pseudoephedrine to single purchasers, knowing it is likely to be used to manufacture methamphetamine, is a key component in the overall strategy to combat this epidemic," said United States Attorney Scott.

"Methamphetamine is the drug of choice in San Joaquin County. Cold and allergy medicine containing pseudoephedrine is the active ingredient used to manufacture methamphetamine. Drug dealers have taken advantage of this product to manufacture methamphetamine by buying products containing pseudoephedrine in quantity or in multiple sales.

By controlling the sale of large quantities of cold medicine containing pseudoephedrine, we hope to have a major impact in reducing the dangerous clandestine labs found in motels, garages, and homes within our county. Clandestine labs often expose innocent infants and small children to harmful chemicals and volatile conditions," said Sheriff Heidelberg.

"The methamphetamine trade comes in all shapes and sizes. We want the public to know that whether it be a small local liquor store, or a huge Mexican meth superlab, we will pursue any outlet that contributes to the production of this devastating drug. When it comes to protecting our communities from the poison of meth, no job is too big or too small," stated Assistant Special Agent in Charge Taylor.

If convicted, the maximum penalty under federal law for each offense is 20 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

The charges are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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